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(54) Apparatus for laying an elongate article

(57) An apparatus for laying out a cable (6) comprising a frame structure (1) through which the cable (6) is

moved. The apparatus has a top side cable guiding means (11) which is mounted for rotation about a vertical axis of the frame structure.

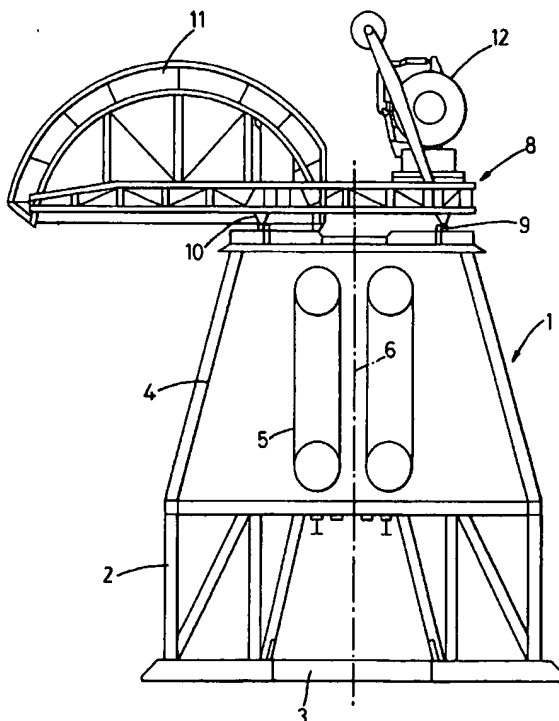


Fig. 1

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Description

The present invention relates to an apparatus for use in laying an elongate flexible article, such as a cable or pipeline, from a vessel supported on a body of water including a vertical passage through the vessel and a frame structure supported above the vertical passage, guide means on said frame structure for guiding said elongate flexible article from above and down through the frame structure and the vertical passage, tensioner means supported in said frame structure for applying tension in said elongate flexible article, and means for holding said elongate flexible article when said tensioner means is not applying tension in said elongate flexible article.

When laying a cable or pipeline offshore the cable or pipeline may be spooled off a reel or drum and lowered into the water through the above disclosed apparatus. During the unwinding the elongate article will move bodily in a direction perpendicular to the unwinding or laying out direction of the said elongate article as a consequence of the article being wound on the reel in a plurality of windings and in consecutive layers. This deviation from the laying line may be overcome by providing a substantially distance between the reel and the apparatus and/or by providing guide means for guiding the elongate article down into the apparatus.

According to the invention such guide means is mounted rotatably on said frame structure about a vertical axis through said vertical passage.

Such an arrangement enables the guide means to move in an arc following the deviation of the elongate article from the laying direction, thereby guiding the elongate article down in the apparatus. Advantageously the distance between the reel and the apparatus may be reduced.

The mounting of the guide means on the frame structure will save valuable deck space on the vessel and the guide means, the movement of which being centered on the vertical passage axis, will guide the elongate article down through the passage in a favourable centered manner.

Preferable embodiments of the invention are set out in the appended claims.

The invention is described in greater detail hereinafter relative to a non-limitative embodiment and the attached drawings which illustrate:

- Fig 1 a schematic side view of an apparatus according to an embodiment of the invention,
- Fig 2 a schematic top view of the apparatus of Fig 1.
- Fig 3 a schematic horizontal section through the apparatus of Fig 1,
- Fig 4 a schematic side view of the apparatus onboard a vessel, and
- Fig 5 a schematic side view of a modified apparatus onboard a vessel.

In Figs 1 and 2 there is disclosed a frame structure 1. The frame structure has a lower part forming a working arch 2, in the bottom part of which there are two moonpool doors 3. The frame structure has an upper part 4 wherein caterpillar tensioners 5 are arranged. As shown in Fig 3 there are a total of four caterpillar tensioners 5, each being moveable to and from a vertical centerline, substantially coincident with an elongated article, such as a cable 6 which is moved vertically down in the frame structure engaged by the tensioners 5. The tensioner arrangement may be opened, that is, each tensioner 5 may be moved radially outwards by means of a suitable drive means, here indicated by a piston-cylinder assembly 7.

The frame structure 1 includes a top side rotating assembly 8. This assembly 8 includes a circular rail 9 whereupon runs a carriage 10 which supports an arched guide means 11 as well as a winch 12. The carriage 10 may thus move in a circular path about a vertical axis substantially coincident with cable 6, as indicated by the double arrows in Fig 2.

In Fig 4 the apparatus hitherto described is placed onboard a vessel 13 having a deck 14, a bottom 15, and a vertical passage or moonpool 16. As shown the frame structure 1 is mounted in the moonpool 16.

A reel 17 is supported on the vessel deck 14. This reel carries a length of cable 6 wound thereon. When laid out the cable 6 is unwound from the reel 17 and is by means of the guide means 11 guided down into the frame structure 1 between the caterpillar tensioners 5. Thus the cable 6 is laid down in the sea through the moonpool 16. The winch 12 is used for temporarily holding the cable 6 if and when for some reason the caterpillar tensioner assembly is opened, for instance, if the cable 6 has an enlargement such as a joint. The moonpool doors 3 are sliding door sections which may be moved to and from each other and may be used to centralize and support the cable 6.

Fig 5 discloses a modified version of the apparatus in Fig 4. In the modified version the frame structure 1 is tiltable about a horizontal axis 18 in a framework 19 supported in the moonpool 16. The framework may be adapted for pivotable movement in any direction by using a universal joint instead of the horizontal axis 18.

The embodiments of the present invention hereinbefore described are given by way of example only, and are not meant to limit the scope thereof in any way. Particularly it should be appreciated that the apparatus may of course be reversed, that is, used for taking in a cable or the like and winding it on a reel.

Claims

1. An apparatus for use in laying an elongate flexible article (6), such as a cable or pipeline, from a vessel (13) supported on a body of water including a vertical passage through the vessel and a frame struc-

- ture (1) supported above the vertical passage, guide means (11) in said frame structure for guiding said elongate flexible article from above and down through the frame structure and the vertical passage, tensioner means (15) supported in said frame structure for applying tension to said elongate flexible article, and means for holding said elongate flexible article when said tensioner means is not applying tension to said elongate flexible article, **characterized in that** said guide means is mounted rotatably on said frame structure about a vertical axis through said vertical passage. 5 10
2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said guide means is mounted on a ring means (9) on said frame structure. 15
3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 2, **characterized in that** said frame structure has a top side, said ring means being arranged on said top side. 20
4. An apparatus as claimed in either of claims 2 or 3, **characterized in that** said holding means is mounted on said ring means. 25
5. An apparatus as claimed in claim 4 **characterized in that** said holding means comprising a winch (12). 30
6. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 1-5, **characterized in that** said tensioner means comprises four caterpillar tensioner belts arranged equally spaced around said vertical axis. 35
7. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 1-6, **characterized in that** said frame structure is arranged tiltably about a horizontal axis. 40
8. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 1-6, **characterized in that** said frame structure is arranged for pivotable movement in any direction. 45
9. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 1-8, **characterized in that** said frame structure including sliding door sections (3) for moving to and from each other and in closed condition being adapted to centralize and support said elongate flexible article. 50

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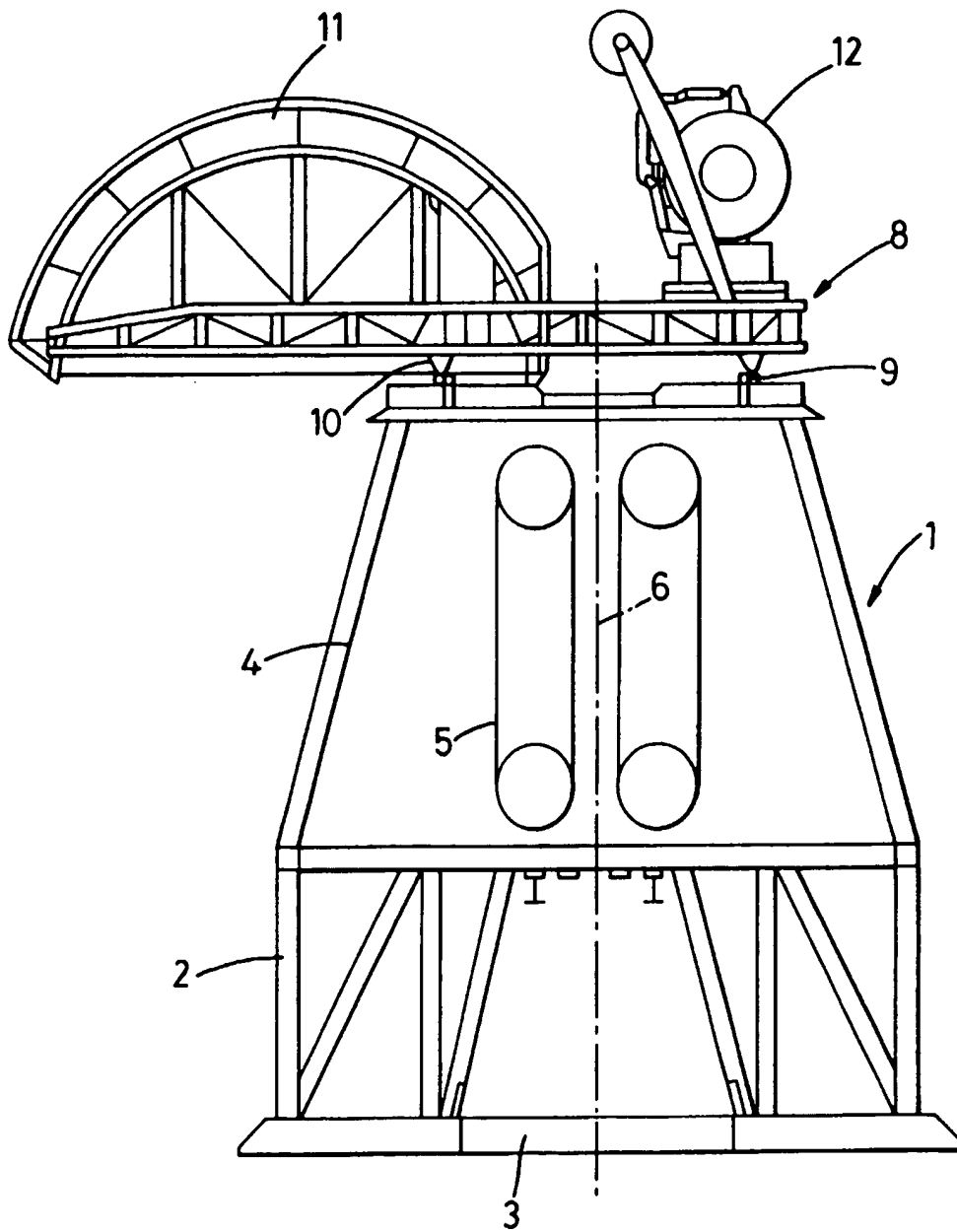


Fig. 1

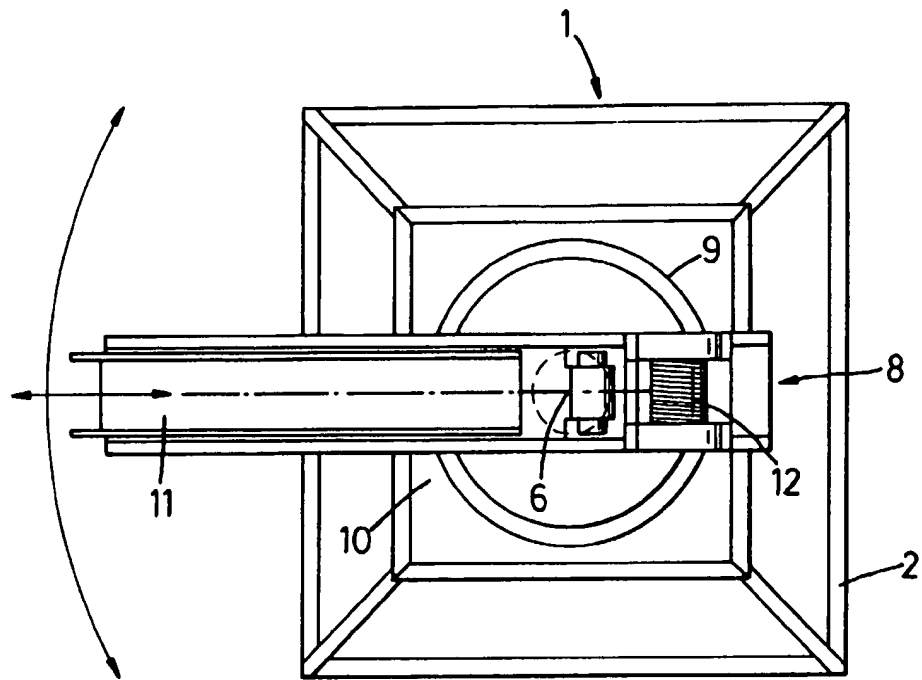


Fig. 2

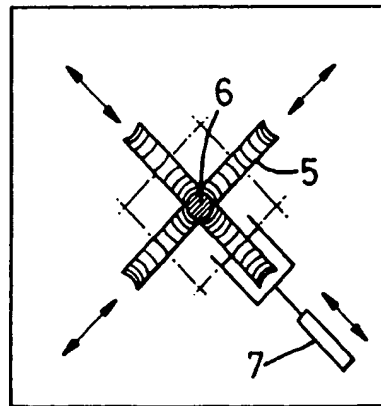


Fig. 3

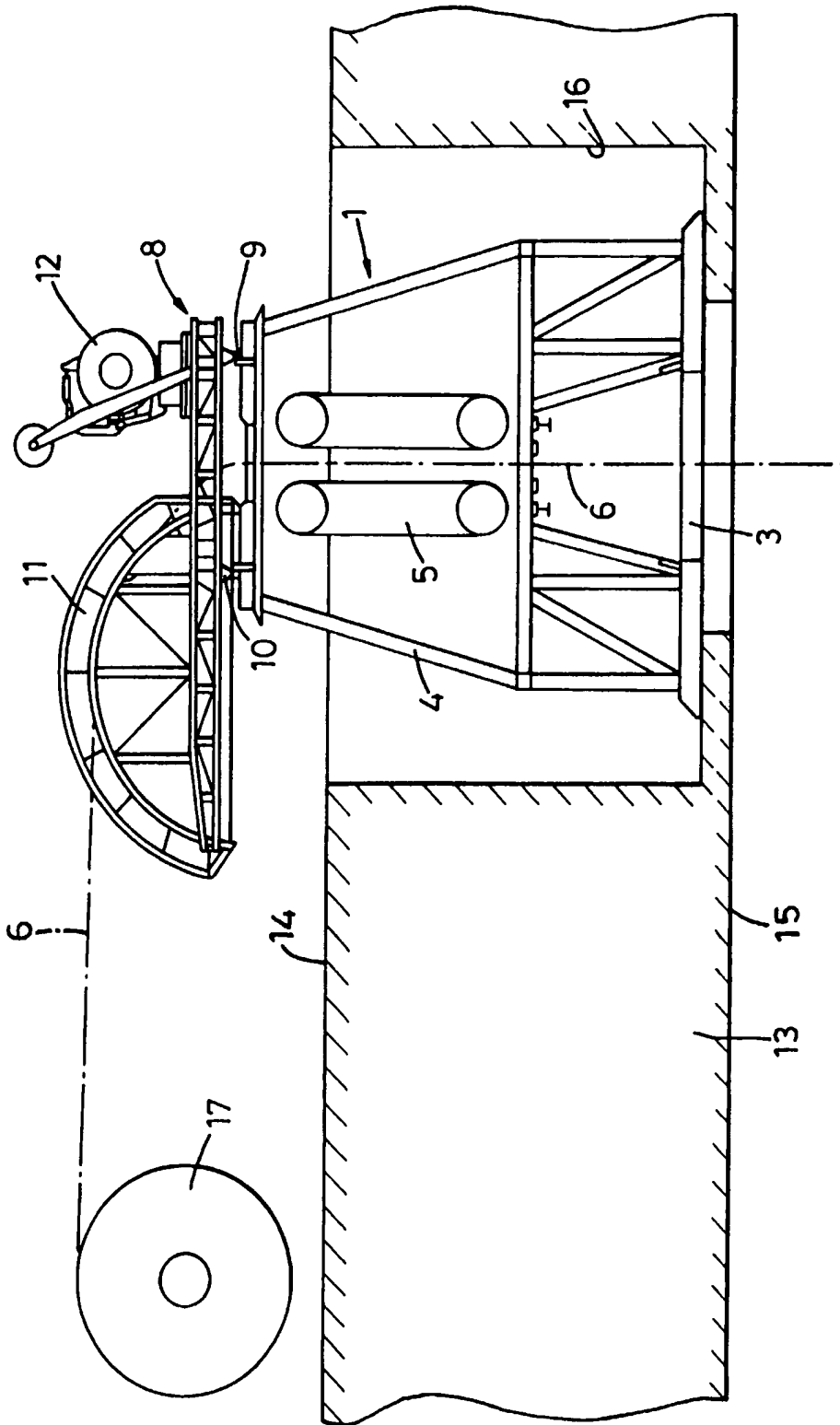


Fig. 4

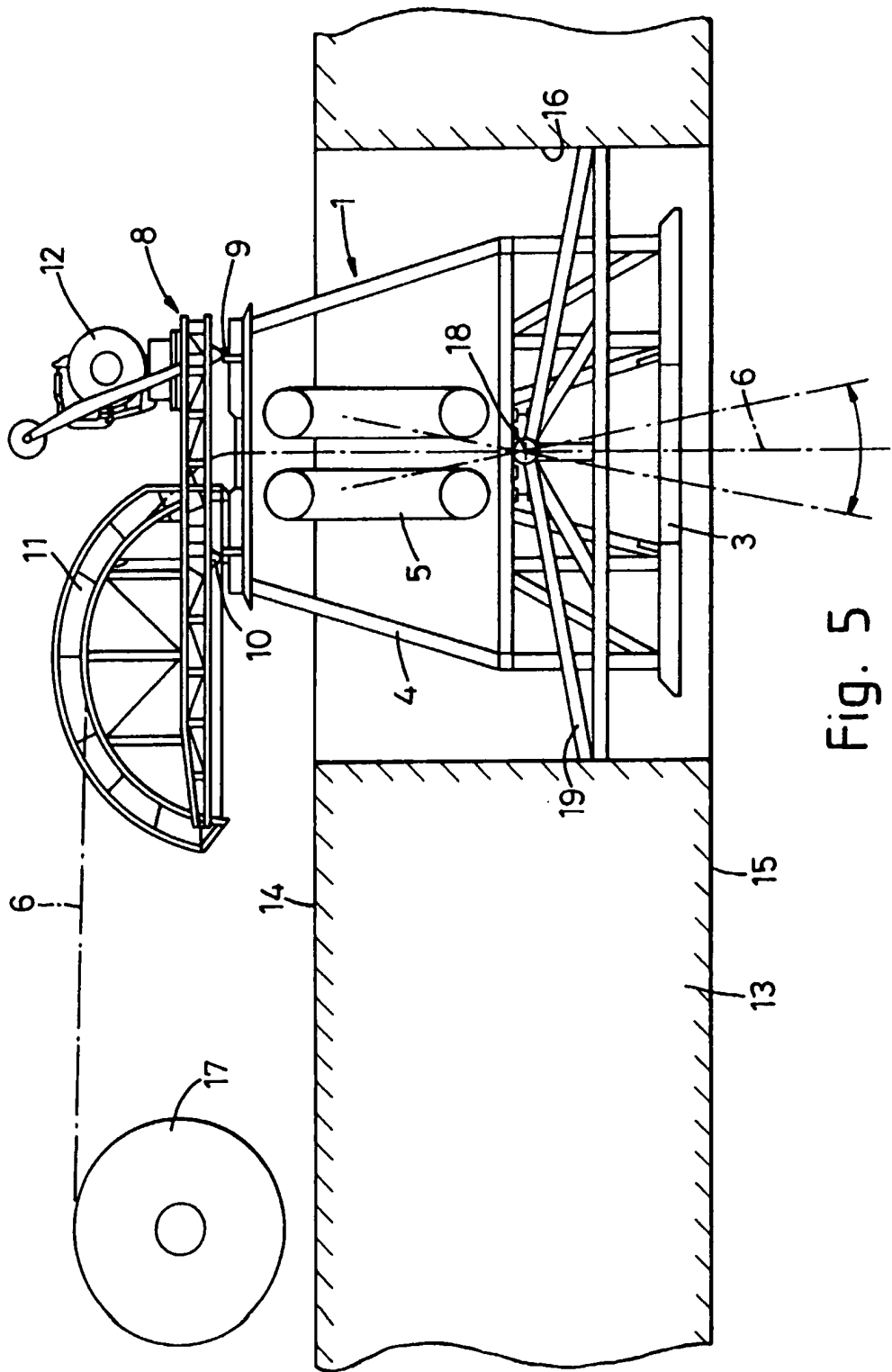


Fig. 5



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 95 30 6082

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
A	WO-A-91 15699 (COFLEXIP) * abstract * * page 1, line 13 - page 2, line 2 * * page 5, line 14 - line 26 * * page 6, line 31 - page 7, line 2 * * page 7, line 30 - line 37 * * page 8, line 10 - line 14 * * page 9, line 11 - line 14 * * page 11, line 32 - page 12, line 25 * * page 16, line 9 - page 17, line 3 * * claims 1,6-9,13 * * figure 1 *	1,5-9	F16L1/18
A	--- WORLD OIL, vol. 214, no. 7, 1 July 1993 HOUSTON, TEXAS (US), pages 39-40, 42 - 46, XP 000377557 SNYDER R E 'NEW OFFSHORE DEVELOPMENTS EMPHASIZE OPERATING EFFICIENCY' *page 40: " Pipelaying capacity enhanced for deepwater fields ** * figure 2 *	1,5,6	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) F16L E21B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search BERLIN		Date of completion of the search 27 February 1996	Examiner Schaeffler, C
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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